THE CRADLE OF BALONG

BY IGNATIUS NDIKO ESAPA

The Balong tribe, also known as the Balong people, are an ethnic group from Cameroon specifically Southwest Region. The Balong people are from the Sawa Ethnic group which comprises of Douala,Balong, Bakweri, Balondo, Bakossi Mbo, Mungo. These groups are found around the coast, the Mungo Valley and on the Slopes of Mounts Kupe, Fako, Nlonako and Manenguba. Edwin Ardener points out the strong linguistic inter-comprehension that exist particularly among the Backweri, Duala, Balong and the Bakossi.

The Majority of these ethnic groups share a common ancestry, common traditional rites and they live in close geographic proximity with high level of linguistic inter-comprehension. According to their traditions of origin, the Bakossi,Balondo, Balong and Mbo shared the same ancestor. Ngoe, who lived on the summit of Mount Manenguba. Due to increased population and disputes among the children, there were frequent clashes among his sons and leading to Civil wars as in case of the Bakossi and their Bafaws niegbours.AS a result of mutual assistance in these wars , some of the groups developed close ties, examples are the Mbo and the Bakossi, Balong, Balondo and the Bafaw.

The Balong prople migrated from Mayement to the Banks of Mungo River, Near IKILLIWINDI where they settled for quite a long time by their leader EKOKO MBOK, and years later Ekoko Mbok died at Mungo. His Son NDOE EKOKO MBOk took over from his father who died at Mungo.

Ndoe Ekoko led Balong people out of Mongo to Mukonje
(The cradle of the Balong), the fourth place of settlement of the dynamic and warlike Balong people. Years passes, some Balong families decided to moved to found other Balong Clans, and these movement was led by some Families heads such as:-

ENYUNGA, Moved southwards to found the DIFANGE CLAN of Balongs in Muyuka Sub-Division of Fako Division. It should be noted that the forefather of Difanje Clan is ENYUGA.

EKPE MBOK Crossed the Mungo River and founded MUIR Clan of Balong in the present Mbanga Sub-Diviison.*(Please read carefully)*

MIKUMBA moved Southwest wards to found the Bia Clan of Balongs in the present Mbonge Rural Council area.

NDOE EKOKO himself remained in Mukonje and founded the Central Blong or the Ndoe Ekoko Clan. Three of the family heads who did not reach Mukonje but

separated at Mungo, and founded the Mbonge tribe were Nangedi Nyando, Etongwe Ndokpe and Mita.

When the Germans came they recognized Mukonje as the Paramount or leading chief of Balongs. That is why the name Mukonje figures prominently in some German literature on Cameroon. This recognition continued during the British administration, which for lack of better term then, referred to each Nvon of Mukonje as VILLAGE GROUP HEAD (V.G.H).

The Five Balong Clans are

1. Upper Balong or Bakoni Clan (Manyement)
2. Central Balong or Ndoe Ekoko Mbok Clan
3. Bia Clan
4. Difanje Clan (Muyuka Area)
5. Muir Clan (Mbanga Sub-Division).

These five Balong Clans are made up of thirty-two traditional villages which are

BAKONI CLAN	EKOKO MBOK CLAN	BAYI CLAN	DIFANJE CLAN	MUIR CLAN
AYONG	MUKONJE	MANYA	MUYUKA	NKWANGSI
EBANGA	LADUMA	KOKE	MALENDE	MOUNDECK
MAYEMENT	MALENDE	FOE	MPONDO	MOMBO BALONG
BARRONG	MUDAME	MUASSA	MUYENGUE	**********

TALANGAYE		MUKEMAFEN	YOKE	MOUYOUKA
SIKAM		SOMBE		YOKE
		LONGE		FIKO
		PANYA		MBANGA BALONG
		GRACE		NDOH 1
				NDOH2
				NDOH3
				NDOH BEACH
				DIKUMA
				DIKUMA MALENDE
				NDOM1
				NDOM2

The Ndoe Ekoko Mbok dynasty which will be traced back to the origin of Balongs :-

a. Ndoe Ekoko Mbok…….
b. Makia Ma Ndoe Ekoko Mbok
c. Ngoh Makia ma Ndoe Ekoko Mbok
d. Ajoke Makia ma Ndoe Ekoko Mbok up to 1929
e. Ebanja Butame bwa Ndoe Ekoko Mbok 1929-1937
f. Anoke Ebanja Butame bwa Ndoe Ekoko Mbok 1938-1980
g. Sona Ebanja Butame bwa Ndoe Ekoko Mbok 1980 -1991
h. John Ebanja (Prof) 1991-2006
i. Ebanga Gabriel Elonge 2006-2021
j. Oscar Ebanja Sona 2021 to date

MUKONJE AREA

Shortly after Nvon Ndoe Ekoko Mbok had settled at Mukonje, he made boundaries for Mukonje with her neighboring traditional villages. All the land within these boundaries is known as Mukonje Area.

The boundaries are as follows :-

i. **On the North Mukonje is bounded by Mambanda, a town of Bafaw tribe, and by the Mungo River along the Mungo Forest Reserve. There are cement pillars planted by the Germans showing the boundary with Mambanda.**
ii. **On the Northwest Mukomje is bounded by Bafaw again at Three Corner where survey pillars were planted by the Germans.**
iii. **On the West Mukonje is bounded by Kang Town of Barombi tribe along Pupunge Stream.**
iv. **On the South west Mukonje is bounded by Ediki Town, of Ekombe Tribe. German Pillars Show thatb boundary.**
v. **On the South Mukonje is boonded by Mudame Town, of Balong tribe and by the Mungo River.**

MUKONJE AREA LAND

During the era and leadership of Nvon Makia ma Ndoe Ekoko Mbok ceded part of Mukonje land to the Geram firm Known as K.K.C. which made a plantation on it known as K.K.C Mukonje Planation, now known as CDC Mukonje Rubber Estate. Mukonje then created Quarters or off-shoots on the rest of its land as follows:-

a. MALENDE MUKONJE : Mukonje people settled their special sons and daughters at Malende. These Sons and daughters now Balong natives of Malende who are closely linked with Mukonje people by Family ties. Non-indigenous natives who came were also settled at Malende. Theynow constitute a very large percentage of Malende Population. Mukonje created a chieftaincy in Malende by appointing a chief there in 1960 on the understanding that Malende still remained part and parcel of Mukonje Area. Mr.Oscar Koti Sona blessed memory was the fsirdt chief so appointed by Nvon S.A. Ebanja to rule Malende.
b. KOPENDA MUKONJE: This was a Quarter created for some special Sons and daughters of Mukonje and Mixed natives.
c. FIKOLOMUANY MUKONJE: : This was a Quarter created for some special Sons and daughters of Mukonje and Mixed natives.
d. DSCHANGE QUARTER MUKONJE: This was a Quarter created for Dschang elements only but is now mixed with people from other tribes.
e. ESSOK OF LAST BUSH MUKONJE: A Quarter created for indigenous natives and nonindigenous natives.
f. MOMBO MUKONJE: A Quarter originally intended mainly for Mukonje indigenous natives who went there to farm but still maintained their houses at Mukonje. But Mombo is now mainly mixed with indigenous natives and non-indegenous natives.
g. MUNYONGO MUKONJE: A Quarter created for Yaounde people only, but now mixed.
h. ENDETE QUARTER MOMBO MUKONJE: A Comparatively new Quarter for mixed non-indigenous natives.

MUKONJE TOWN

Mukonje is a town of the Balong peoples. the same as Kumba Town to the Bafaw peoples. It is quite strange to many people of why Mukonje is refer as TOWN. When we speak of Mukonje Town, we mean Mukonje Village and its reserved powers. Those reserved powers are the various Quarters and the CDC Mukonje Rubber Estate with its eight Labour Camps. All these make up what is known as Mukonje Town. Mukonje area is the highest centre of agricultural activities in Kumba City Council area, and is in fact the capital of Economic activity in Kumba Municipality. Mukonje Area produces Rubber, Cocoa, Coffee and lots of Food Stuffs and vegetables.